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STUDENT ESSAY

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US ARMY EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT J. KEIVIT
FIELD ARTILLERY

1 MAY 1984



US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

US ARMY EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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1 May 1984



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ABSTRACT

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For the past decade there has been considerable debate concerning the appropriate form and substance of continuing education for general officers, the executive level of leadership in the Army. The debate has frequently gotten off-track because of confusion in the use of the terms training, education and development. These terms are defined in relation to the desired outcome of the instructional process and an inter-relationship between the three is presented. Specific programs and initiatives resulting from the Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO) study are then examined. While the RETO study provided a sound philosophical basis for a comprehensive executive development program, it lacked analysis and identification of specific training needs. As a result, considerable effort and resources have been devoted to the development, design and implementation of training activities that lack a clearly defined, desired outcome. In the absence of analysis, the full value of the programs and initiatives underway is difficult to assess. Structured, disciplined analysis is required if the Army is to realize the full potential of its executive development efforts.

The United States military "is being bombarded by complaints about its ability to plan and execute missions without embarrassing and sometimes deadly flaws."¹ "Uniformed leadership is under what may be the closest scrutiny in a generation."² "The pressure is likely to mount at a time taxpayers are being asked to spend record sums on defense."³ In his attack on military performance since Korea, Jeffery Record cites an "apparent absence in the Pentagon of a capacity for self correction (and) . . . profound intellectual and institutional deficiencies within the US military itself."⁴

The purpose of this paper is not to counter the attack of Mr. Record, defend military performance or to deny that deficiencies may exist. Rather, it is to examine the status of the training, education and development of the executive level of US Army leadership, the General Officer Corps, and to assess the ability of the educational system to meet the needs of the Army on the next battlefield. Thereby, it will examine the Army's capacity for self-correction in overcoming intellectual and institutional deficiencies.

For the past decade there has been considerable debate but few conclusions concerning the appropriate form and substance of military education for senior military officers. Many proposals have been made and several programs tried in the area of general officer education. At issue in almost every discussion of the subject is the absence of agreed definitions of the terms training, education and development. JCS Publication 1 provides the following definitions:

Military education - The systematic instruction of individuals in subjects which will enhance their knowledge of the science and art of war.⁵

Military training - The instruction of personnel to enhance their capacity to perform specific military functions and tasks . . .⁶

Army Regulation 310-25, Dictionary of United States Army Terms, makes no revision or supplementation of these terms. Neither publication offers a definition for development. DA Pamphlet 600-3, Officer Professional Development and Utilization, and the Department of the Army study, Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO) provide the following definitions:

Professional Military Education (PME) - Education pertaining to the body of professional knowledge common to all Army officers such as leadership, military history, management, etc.

Officer Professional Development - The development of the professional attributes and capabilities of the Army officer to meet the needs of the Army through planned schooling and progressive assignments.⁸

The RETO Glossary also uses the JCS definition of military education thereby confusing a body of "knowledge" with "instructional process." What is meant and intended is further confused when education is described in the narrative of the report as "the process of assisting a person in developing mentally or morally."⁹ Such confusion inhibits a disciplined discussion of the relationships that exist between training, education and development . . . general and the subject of executive development in the Army in particular. It is possible to reduce confusion and provide a common base for discussion and understanding if the terms are defined in relation to the desired outcome of the learning process rather than in relation to content or to the process itself. The definitions that follow describe outcome and will be used throughout the remainder of this paper.

TRAINING - learning which results in the ability to perform a specific task; predicted task performance immediately upon completion of successful training.

Using this definition, the outcome is performance of a task known in advance. The task could come from any learning domain and could be as dissimilar as speaking Russian or zeroing an M-16 rifle. The instructional processes could also be highly dissimilar.

EDUCATION - learning which results in the acquisition of generalized skills, knowledge and concepts.

This definition does not require performance of a specific, predetermined task. Rather, it involves imparting skills, knowledge and concepts that would permit a person to adjust to variations and changes in his environment as they occur. Examples of such generalized skills range from skills in the use of hand tools to those dealing with problem solving and decision-making. A person so educated might be expected to be able to build a bookcase or a fence or, more importantly, some other structure that is presently unknown or undefined. The acquisition of knowledge and concepts by their nature provide a framework for future learning or the necessary background for the solution of new problems.

DEVELOPMENT - learning which results in the enhancement of personal capacities, traits or attributes. Development results in increased awareness, capacity, ability and potential. Development is individual growth in such areas as self-confidence, mental alertness, courage and tolerance for ambiguity.

Development is the result of training, education and the entire range of life experiences the individual has encountered. It includes observation

of, participation in, and responsibility for events and experiences. Successful development results in the individual having increased potential.

This broader basis of defining development is found in Army Senior Executive Service (SES) regulations which recognize that "Executive development can be accomplished through attendance at formal training courses, developmental assignments, details, special work assignments, participation in professional conferences, and self-development activities."¹⁰ The RETO study also expands its definition of officer professional development in the body of the report. It recognizes "special learning . . . which encompasses all forms of learning whether in schools, in units, under tutors, or in a succession of assignments."¹¹

The common element of training, education and development is that they all involve learning.

Training - immediate and predicted task performance.

Education - generalized skills, knowledge and concepts.

Development - enhancement of personal capacities, traits and attributes; personal growth.

Equally as important, these distinct learning outcomes are closely interrelated. Knowledge that is imparted to enable the learning and performance of a specific predicted task will frequently also be applicable to other, unspecified tasks. The performance of several tasks, particularly if they are associated, may lead to a generalized skill and allow the performance of new tasks which have not had specific training. The development of a trait such as self-confidence can assist in the performance of a task. Conversely, self-confidence may be developed from previous task performance or generalized skills that have been acquired. The acquisition of knowledge and concepts may contribute to

trait development or permit future performance of a task that is not yet known. Learning the concept of the interactive nature of supply and demand in Economics may be applicable to the solution of problems in recruiting or retention of the force.

It is also important to recognize that training, education and development rarely occur in isolation. Most learning experiences will have elements of each outcome. Observers would generally agree that instructing a basic training soldier to properly execute left (right) face is a training situation. The desired outcome, specific task performance, matches the training definition. However, the information presented to the trainee and the trainee's practice execution of facing movements provide an educational base for later learning facing movements while marching. The role model of the Drill Sergeant and the inculcation of discipline through the execution of drill movements are elements of the young soldier's development. While all elements are present, focus on the primary desired outcome identifies instruction in facing movements as a training situation.

As noted previously, the executive level of leadership in the Army is taken to be the General Officer Corps. It is therefore necessary to distinguish executive development from officer development in general. The crossover point in the formal training and education system is attendance at a senior Service college. In the case of Army officers this normally results in attendance at the US Army War College (AWC). This point is chosen because while most officers who attend this level of formal schooling will not attain general officer rank, rarely has a non-attendee attained that rank. In the context of the definitions that

have been presented, this examination of the status of executive development in the US Army includes the training, education and development of those officers selected for or promoted to general officer rank subsequent to AWC attendance.

The most comprehensive review of officer training and education in the past fifteen years is the RETO study completed in 1978. That study specifically recommended "providing for the continuing education of general officers, particularly as they move from one position to another."¹² "By the time an officer has achieved enough seniority to perform tasks involving great responsibility, specific position requirements emerge and demand relatively unique, sometimes tailored attention. Thus, education and training demands for the senior grades tend to be a function of particular job demands."¹³ Based on its analysis, the study concluded that:

Any successful general officer development system should comprise: careful selection and assignment procedures, taking into consideration the Army's needs and the individual's special capabilities; transitional modules which support the general officer's interassignment needs; orientational programs designed to keep the senior executive updated with accurate, timely, useful information about his profession; and, developmental programs which enhance the continued growth of the general officer's skills and abilities through relevant education and training methodologies.¹⁴

There is an inherent logic presented in the study which supports the argument for transitional, orientational and developmental programs for general officers. In this regard, the study was highly successful in its "attempt to build a philosophical foundation for the determination of education and training requirements."¹⁵

To the extent that selection and assignment procedures are able to meet the Army's requirement for fully qualified executive level leaders,

continuing education and training programs may be reduced or eliminated. To the extent such procedures are unable to meet the requirement, some sort of executive development process is necessary. The Army's efforts toward specialization, the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS), will come to fruition in the 1990s. However, "even the specialist may become obsolete, for the specialty may still change too fast for the individual to keep current or it may be superceded by advances in knowledge that make the (present) knowledge or skill unnecessary. To an increasing degree a professional career . . . will have to be regarded as a continuous learning experience."¹⁶ The seriousness with which continuing education is treated in the civilian sector is typified by the fact that "Adelphi University on Long Island has more than 200 people studying for their Masters in Business Administration through classes held on commuter trains speeding in and out of nearby New York City."¹⁷

In other sections supporting the need for an institutionalized program of continuing education and training for general officers, the RETO study cites future trends such as "the continuing introduction of new technology, the rapidly rising lethality of weapons . . . (and) the parallel effect of new technology . . . to increase vastly the complexity of decision-making on the battlefield"¹⁸ which will require that decision-makers be current and knowledgeable. In considering the extremely complex situations in which tomorrow's leaders will need to make decisions, Weston Agor believes intuitive abilities will be increasingly important. In an extended study which included military organizations he found that "without exception, the top managers in every organization rated significantly higher than middle- and lower-level managers in their ability to use intuition on the job to make decisions."¹⁹ He

believes organizations of tomorrow will require executives trained in intuitive decision-making techniques. The Army's leaders on tomorrow's battlefields will be required to make decisions under circumstances where data necessary for traditional decision-making processes will be unavailable, inadequate or too costly to gather in a timely manner. It would be fairly easy to conclude from this brief discussion that intuitive decision-making should be a core subject in any general officer level training or education program. What has not been addressed, however, is how well general officers (designees) are already capable of making decisions in such situations. In addition to technological change, the Army's changing strength requirements, increased emphasis on specialization, social and demographic changes in the society at large and, the increased significance of resource constraints all suggest the need for continual learning. Regrettably, the effect of these factors is unclear in regard to curriculum design. "The most important function of an executive development program is to enable people who are already involved in the . . . activities of management to see a pattern in what they are doing in relation to the activities of the organization . . . (But) it must also upgrade the executive in knowledge and understanding of his current field . . . and should prepare him for greater responsibilities."²⁰

The RETO study attempted to address the issue of what training and education might be required. The study's

recommendations for an institutionalized program of continuing education and training for the Army's general officers are based upon the views of the general officers themselves as expressed through numerous interviews as well as selective analysis of current civilian industry, academic, sister service and foreign army management development philosophies and programs.²¹

Basing the training requirement on the views of the general officers themselves poses several questions regarding the validity of the requirement. The general officers have a relatively limited basis upon which to assess and compare their present competency against the required competency for their new position. This shortcoming is compounded in considering the new position upon transition to war. Incumbents can assess the ease and comfort with which they are able to address issues but are relatively unable to objectively measure the suitability of their actions. The survey of incumbent approach to definition of a training requirement frequently results in a focus on what the incumbent should know rather on what the incumbent should be able to do. The few "hot" issues of the day tend to be overly emphasized and the final outcome is often the lowest common denominator of agreement rather than the needs of a particular position. These factors could easily result in the inclusion of unnecessary training and educational content in courses so developed. More serious, however, is the problem of projecting the adequacy of peacetime competency into a wartime situation. The scope and nature of many general officer responsibilities will undoubtedly change dramatically in the event of war. While the RETO study clearly recognizes "that every Army policy or program, every curriculum developed in support of training and education . . . must be conditioned by clear understanding that the Army's mission is to fight,"²² it is unclear as to how its specific proposals address this fundamental requirement. RETO suggests that:

The case for an institutionalized program of continuing education and training for the Army's general officers (GO) can be made from at least four perspectives: the persistent perception at many levels that there are 'problems' in the Army's GO leadership; selective analysis of extant industrial and educational management development philosophies; the

programs and attitudes of sister Services, and armies of other nations; the views of the corps of general officers themselves.²³

A fifth perspective, that of job and task analysis, is addressed in the RETO study as a recommendation that "DA direct an analysis of all general officer positions and determine the skills and knowledge required in each for use in developing relevant continuing education and training programs for general officers."²⁴

It is from the fifth perspective of a deliberate, disciplined analysis that an appropriate, valid instructional program is most likely to result. "The design and development of instruction necessarily must follow an adequate needs analysis."²⁵ The purpose of such analysis is "to concentrate resources on the high priority jobs and tasks."²⁶ While interview of and discussion with serving general officers is a valuable and necessary aspect of analysis, impartial and independent observations are equally necessary. The view from superiors is also necessary in order to gain a more complete description of the position and its requirements. Finally, postulating the change in requirements based on transition from peace to war also requires deliberate, disciplined analysis.

Analysis of existing industrial and educational management development programs and philosophies is also inadequate to serve as a basis of the Army's executive development needs. While much of value may be derived from such programs an obvious shortcoming of this approach is that military needs, especially in war, are likely to be quite different from those in the civilian sector. There is also good reason to question the soundness of many such programs in their own right. "American medical schools have made science and research their principle priorities . . . (realizing) that prestige went to professors who carried on research."²⁷ Training medical students to be practitioners thereby

suffers. The situation is similar in business schools. "The typical business professors . . . do what most professors do: teach and do research addressed to their fellow professors."²⁸ "The curricula of professional schools . . . always entail a mixture of several components:

1. What the professors learned . . .
2. What the qualifying authorities think should be known . . .
3. What the new revolutionaries . . . think is appropriate.

It should surprise no one that conservatism is the norm and innovation the exception in professional education."²⁹ To the extent this is true, modeling general officer development programs on those existing in industry and academia could be contrary to the Army's needs for the future.

The RETO study observed "the tendency of most curriculum planners to add far too many subjects to a course,"³⁰ but may have committed the same error as it attempted to define Army requirements for Professional Military Education (PME) in general and to identify subject content for general officer education in particular.

As senior level executives they (general officers) must acquire new managerial skills which prepare them to manage diverse functions for which they have responsibility; to make effective decisions in areas where their personal technical competence may be marginal; to function effectively in interagency, interactivity, interservice and international environments; and to provide senior level functional management in both peace and war.

In their roles as military managers at the executive level they must be proficient in skills and techniques included in problem identification, problem-solving, and problem avoidance; in maintaining control of large bureaucracies; in management of the decision process with large staffs; in planning and organizing, to include force development and time and resource allocation.

The specific professional expertise of senior officers should be in the conduct of land warfare by corps and larger forces, to include force planning and structuring, command, management, strategic deployment and tactical employment of units marshaled on short notice for specific purposes.

Command and control of large units in wartime conditions provides the greatest challenge to senior officers who must keep abreast of new technology in Army, joint, and combined command and communications systems, in intelligence gathering, and in weapons systems capabilities. Being able to function under conditions of great psychological stress and physical exertion is essential. So also is the ability to make timely decisions based on too much or too little information; to interpret the broad guidance provided in a mission statement or policy directive that demands mission accomplishment; but within constraints dictated by national or international considerations.³¹

While this evaluation helps to build the philosophical foundation, it is of marginal value to curriculum design. This problem is similar to that of defining the need for PME. Subjects such as ADP, Military History and Military Justice are added or deleted from programs arbitrarily. As a result, they become viewed as subjects to be known in their own right rather than in the context of their contribution to meeting valid training and educational requirements. To meet the purpose of providing "to each general officer the specific skills and knowledge needed to perform in a new assignment with maximum effectiveness from the outset,"³² demands that the performance requirements of that assignment be known in advance. Such an analysis is a prerequisite "for individualized, tutorial-type, directed acquisition of skills and knowledge tailored to the specific needs of the officer concerned in relation to the position to be filled."³³

The programs of sister services and the approach of the armies of other nations to this problem share the same shortcomings. They exhibit a tendency toward reliance on programs existing in industry and in the

academic world. Detailed job and position analysis is not the basis of program design.

Evidence of all of the developmental weaknesses already addressed is to be found in the initiatives that have been undertaken since the RETO study. The most ambitious of these undertakings has been the development of the general officer Capstone Course conducted by the National Defense University. As a JCS sponsored program, the course was to be conducted for students selected from all services. A thorough, comprehensive proposal was developed that, through negotiation, was able to satisfy the demands of each service. To meet those demands, however, resulted in a thirteen week program of instruction, a price tag that has proven to be unacceptable. One can only speculate if the thirteen week course could have survived had it served to meet a specific, valid, acknowledged training requirement. Notwithstanding (or, perhaps disregarding) the comprehensive program that was initially developed, Capstone has been reduced to an eight week course. It has retained the feature of including general officers (designees) from all services as students. Further development and evaluation of the Capstone Course continues.

A second initiative has been the proposal to conduct General Officer Professional Development Conferences at the Army War College. The AWC program is intended to emphasize operational art and how to fight echelons above the division. It is envisioned to be a two-sided exchange resulting from presentation and discussion of developing corps and theater doctrine. A secondary focus will be the personal development of the attending general officers through a formal and comprehensive health, physical fitness assessment and education program. While the

overall plan is for up to five conferences per year, approval has been given to conduct a trial conference in May 1984.

A further initiative resulting from the RETO study has been participation of selected general officers (designees) in an executive assessment and development program. The basis for this program was that "nearly all generals interviewed made the point in one way or another that the most critical aspect of effective performance on the part of general officers is that of matching the type general officer to the type duty position for which he is best suited."³⁴ It is believed that the assessment center process is able to identify three different types of senior executives:

- the dependable, cautious managerial type,
- the outgoing managerial type, and
- the potentially creative managerial type.

While it has not been determined which type individual is best suited to a particular general officer duty position, it would be potentially possible to do so given analysis of the positions. More controversial is the matter of how to integrate development center data into the management and assignment process. Participants in such programs gain useful insights into their own strengths and weaknesses. The experience can assist participants in improving their ability to understand and interact with others. From this perspective alone, the program may be of sufficient benefit for continuation or expansion to remaining general officers (designees).

In addition to these specific initiatives, the previously existing Combined Component Brigadier Generals' Conference (Charm School) continues as an aspect of the overall development process. Training and educational opportunities other than those described above are available for selected

general officers. Some modification in the content, timing and distribution of the Chief of Staff's Weekly Summary resulted from the RETO recommendations in an attempt to improve the flow of current information to the General Officer Corps. There are undoubtedly other initiatives of which this author is unaware that have been undertaken in an attempt to improve general officer management and development. In any case, it is clear that there has been no shortage of effort or concern in regard to the issue of executive development.

While the various attempts to improve executive development programs for Army general officers are extremely costly, the potential payoffs to the Army and to the nation warrant such efforts. The questions that remain however, are the questions of cost versus benefit; how much effort is enough; how well are the various initiatives addressing the real needs of the officers and the Army? As noted previously, the programs are still being developed and analyzed and, in the case of the AWC conference, still to be conducted. The difficulty in answering these questions is not the result of the programs still being under development. Rather, it is that there has been no clearly stated need against which the programs can be measured. RETO provided a philosophical basis for a program but no articulation of a specific training requirement. In addition to presenting problems for evaluation, this may explain why the programs are still undergoing development. RETO recognized that "it is incumbent upon the Army to identify those critical skills (both technical as well as managerial) essential to success on the modern battlefield and to insure that its officer corps is fully trained and developed with respect to these skills."³⁵ This recognition was the basis of the recommendation that the Army analyze all general

officer positions. Having made the recommendation, the study proceeded to discount the Army's ability to do so by suggesting:

That the Army needs to recognize that application of the Instructional System Design approach is best suited for technical tasks ('hard skills'). Application of the system to the 'soft skills' (managerial and leadership skills) requires that some variations in the process become acceptable. (Industrial development programs have recognized that some managerial tasks simply do not lend themselves to routine job analysis procedures, nonetheless they consider training in such areas (normally people oriented skills) as crucial.)³⁶

While it is agreed that the ISD approach is best suited for technical tasks, the same disciplined approach is necessary to properly define so called "soft skills" for instructional development purposes. In fact, the ISD structure and discipline may be even more critical in the case of soft skills. "If your goals are important to achieve, it is essential that you do more than just talk about them in fuzzy terms . . . Broad statements of intent can be achieved only to the degree that their meaning is understood."³⁷ The need for general officers who are "better planners" and who can "think Joint" probably exists. It is also easy to accept intuitively that the Army should "increase tactical and technical training" and "expand instruction in communications skills." However, it is only through the structure and discipline of techniques such as the ISD approach that the specific skills and knowledge required of general officers can be identified. Much has already been done in the soft skills area. The matrix of organizational leadership behaviors³⁸ provides a state of the art view of perhaps the softest skill of all.

Efficient application of instructional technology demands an analysis of what is required on the job before the design of the instructional system can be accomplished. If the Army is to realize its full

potential capacity for self-correction in overcoming intellectual and institutional deficiencies it must ensure that its executive level leadership possesses the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively discharge its responsibilities. An executive development program based on a valid needs assessment can contribute to that ability.

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